The Theosophical FORUM

MARCH 1901

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CHARLES JOHNSTON, Flushing, N. Y.

THE THEOSOPHICAL

FORUM

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TRUTH.

Many are the minds in these days seeking Truth. Earnestly seeking, as they believe: willing to sacrifice all for Truth's sake. And when She comes in pleasant guise, following perchance some groove marked out for Her, the seekers rally about Her and move forward with exceedingly great joy. But when She comes with stern face, setting aside all preconceived ideas, shattering vanities great and small, then strong and wise is he, who, standing upright, in the midst of his broken gods, can still bear witness that what remains is *Truth.*

VII.

Within the alcyonic globes of differentiated pranic-manasic atoms the vibration divided them also into solid-liquid cores and gaseous envelopes, and a kinetic skin of phenomena. And then a new world—a world of Life, came into material existence. All the atoms of thought, or manasa, surrounding each and every pranic atom, and making its molecule of energy, so to speak, were that particular kind of kinetic manasa ready to change its rate of vibration within an octave, and the forms prana assumes from the action of thought within the kinetic belt were living and thinking. Each pranic globe, which was a small state of product of the manasic, consisted of two globes in coadunition—two in one. Each pranic atom was the center of a manasic molecule and represented the universe. All things were two in one, created by harmonic vibration between them, and existence by the greater strength of the lower notes, or attraction. It was at once less and more wonderful than the manasic world—a specialized form of it.

When within this kinetic belt of the prana the etheric solar globes formed here and there, they were three fold, each atom of the new plane of matter having its surrounding envelope of prana-manasa—a specialization of the pranic world in which (what we call) force had been added to life and mind. The static ether, vibrating in each of its elements through one octave, divided into central core (our sun, and other suns) and outer covering, with a skin or belt of kinetic energy, "as above," which developed an etheric world. All things on this etheric world were caused by the harmonic vibration between the etheric atoms and their surrounding envelopes, except that while all things in this etheric world must have life, not all need have mind. The chord of three was not necessary to create; the chord of two was enough, and the manasic atoms might cease to vibrate in chord with the prana and ether without affecting the creation. Only in the etheric world (and below it) could there be living mindless ones. To the etheric globes the stellar pranic cores transferred their light, which manifested itself in the solid static ether as

Attraction and in the gaseous static ether as Repulsion, within the kinetic skin of each etheric world more specialized and less varied than the pranic.

Our sun is not of prakriti, but of static ether, composed of the separate and individual elementary substances of the ether, and their compounds vibrating in the lower notes of their octaves. It is our father, not our elder brother. Its envelope of static ether in which the planet revolves is composed of the elementary substances and combinations vibrating in the higher notes of their octave. The light transferred to this etheric globe from its mother, Alcyone, manifests itself in the lower vibrations of the sun as Attraction; in the higher vibrations of its envelope as Repulsion, and within the kinetic skin wherein these forces play, the prakritic globes, planets, were born.

Take our earth. Each atom is fourfold—whether of the static core or of the static gaseous envelope. Creation on it is limited to the kinetic skin, wherein the attraction of the lower and repulsion of the higher notes in each octave of vibration have full play. All things on it must have come from the chording vibrations of the atoms of the prakritic elementary substances and their envelope of ether. They may or may not have life or mind—the ether atom may have lost its chord with its pranic envelope, or the pranic envelope may have lost its chord with the manasic; but the combination must have force or energy within it. It may have lost Mind and Life in acquiring it, or after acquiring it; but it had to have life before it could become prakriti.

All things in the prakritic world flow from the Life of the etheric and the Mind of the pranic worlds. Everything in the etheric world has life, and our unconscious personification or "vivification" of etheric life transferred into fauna or flora, or into force of any kind, has a natural explanation. The thrill of vibration in one octave through the differentiated consciousness of the universe by which the light was separated from the darkness, the lower from the higher, was all that was required to create each star, and sun, and world, and all that in them is. And it was all good.

Each thing on every lower world was but the translation into form of the type of the next world (or plane) above. As each element on this prakritic type, so each combination of those elements

into crystal or tree or animal is but the translation. The normal earth from the crystal to (the animal) man was pure, and clean, and holy. Sin had not entered.

How did it come?

On the vast manasic world there was "a special creation"—that of the Angel Man. The three planes of Spirit above were undifferentiated consciousness, but they were in different octaves of vibration, and these working on the three highest forms of differentiated consciousness (manasic matter) brought them to chording vibration so that when they combined and reached their highest point in evolution they "created" the Angel (or manasic) man. He was the product in kinetic manasa of the three spiritual planes above him, precisely as the animal man was the product in kinetic prakriti of the three material planes above him. The latter was the "shadow" of the other.

The Angel-man had a material (manasic) body, but his energy life, and mind were spiritual. The animal man had a prakritic body, with energy, life, and mind that were material.

So far all was good.

The animal man has four bodies—one of prakriti, one of ether, one of prana, and one of manasa. It may be true, and probably is, that his manasic body is not sounding in chord with his prakritic body, but only with those atoms of it which are in his brain and nerves; but that is immaterial—for future consideration.

The Angel man had but one body, of manasa, in which the spirit dwelt; but that body was identical in substance with the body that made the mind of the animal man. His manasic body joined the manasic body of the animal man, joined with it by entering into the animal man's mind, as easily as water from one glass is added to water in another glass, and the animal "man became a living soul," endowed with speech, while the Angel-man was given "a skin coat."

The prakritic body of the animal man was the result in prakriti of an etheric-pranic-manasic, or "astral" body, formed in accordance with the Universal Law. For what he was by nature, he could not be blamed. He stood naked and not ashamed before the Radiance. He did not make his astral body; he was the mere translation of it into prakriti, as all other created things were, and that invisible

astral self (figuratively) stood at his right hand, moulding and shaping him.

But when the Angel-man entered his mind, all this was changed. He "knew God from Evil." To his mind of manasa had been added the Spirit—the Atma—Buddhi's Consciousness of the three Spiritual planes. He has become "as one of us," said the Angel-men of the firmament, of Heaven. He now held the seven planes and was a creator. Each thought and desire that, when an animal only, fell harmless, now created on the pranic and etheric world. Soon beside him, at his left hand (figuratively) there grew up a second etheric or astral body, that of his desires; and his prakritic body was no longer the product of the astral body on his right hand. It was the joint product of the left-hand Kamic astral body he had created, and the right hand normal astral body. He was no longer in harmony with the Radiance. He could no longer face it. He had created discord—Sin.

The pretty legend of the two "Angels," one on the right hand and one on the left, has its physical basis in this truth, but, of course, as a matter of actual fact, the normal and abnormal astral bodies are in mechanical union. It is the Kamic self-made astral body that remains from one incarnation to another, producing in joint action with a new normal astral body, a new physical body for the Inner-Self, or Angel taking the pilgrimage through the lower world.

All the Angel-man did not enter the animal man on the pranic etheric-prakitic globes; only a few. It was a pilgrimage through matter in which those who make it are meeting many adventures, but the legends are many, and have no place in the physics, although the legends are all founded on the facts of the physics.

This, in crude and bold outline, is the story of creation to the fall of man according to the ancient physics, translated into the words and phrases of modern physics. The latter, in the latest discoveries of modern science, seem to have stolen a shive from the ancient loaf in the expectation that it would not be detected. Each and every step forward that modern science has made in the past twenty years, each and every discovery of every kind in the physical field, has been but the affirmative of some ancient doctrine taught in the temples of the East before "Cain took unto himself a wife."

In the physical universe we have the four informing physical globes, so that as a whole or in its parts, it is "a string of seven globes," reaching from the highest spirit to the lowest matter. The awakened Universal Consciousness in vibration—undifferentiated in the three globes above, differentiated in the four globes below—in its last analysis is all one. But there is a gulf between matter and spirit, radically dividing them, and in the physical universe we are concerned only with physics and physical laws, until we reach its outmost boundaries and come in touch with the spiritual planes beyond.

This is the view of the universe at first glance, as in the smaller universe of this earth we at first see only its solid and liquid globes. And even after the discovery of the gas, we do not apprehend its important work in and behind the others until it has been pointed out to us. Nor do we at first apprehend the work of the spiritual in the material, and the object of metaphysics is to show, through the physics, the connection between them: that the spirit works through matter; that where we can see but four there are seven beads on each material string; and that the last bead of each string is itself a chain of beads, the "chain of seven" applying only to the seventh manifestation, or *prakriti,* while the "strings" apply to the way in which they come.

On each unravelled string leading from our central sun down to a planet there are seven beads corresponding to the seven globes in the chain of each planet, each to each, yet not the same. There is a distinction, and it is no wonder there should have been confusion at first and a mixing of "strings" with "chains." The physics as they progress will clear this confusion away.

In the manasic globe, which is the first differentiation of that which forms the spiritual globes above, the resulting mind or manasa is mainly the differentiated Divine Mind of the highest. It has a "chain" of two globes only, itself and the Divine Mind globe, although its "string" of globes is four.

It is the perfected differentiation of the *Buddhi* in *manasa* that causes the formation of the pranic globes, which have chains of four and strings of five, and the full and perfect differentiation of the Atma in manasa-prana that causes the formation of the etheric globes, which have chains of six and strings of six. Consciousness,

Buddhi and *Atma* are practically the same as the *manasa, prana,* and ether, each to each, only the latter are differentiated and the former are not.

Each of the three astral globes is the reflection in matter of the three spiritual globes beyond, each to each, and all to all.

The difference between matter and spirit is a difference in Motion only. Both are vibrating, so that both are in mechanical motion, from force without, like the waves of the ocean, but only the matter has what we may properly call motion of its own, or that produced from within—from the atom and each organism of it up to the ALL, as the vibration is from the ALL down to the atom. It is this center of force in an atom, this motion outside of vibration, or rather beside it, which we call "differentiation." Brinton's "daring psychological speculation" that "mind was coextensive with motion" (from organization) was but a repetition of one of the most ancient axioms.

Take our solar etheric globe. It has two other globes of matter, consubstantial; a globe of *prana* and a globe of *manasa.* They are not beyond it, or beside it, but one with it, atom for atom. But what are they in reality? Globes of Atma, Buddhi, and Consciousness in which the atoms, having organized, are in motion, are they not?

Let this motion in this material universe cease, and matter would melt away and resolve into spirit. From spirit it came, to spirit it belongs, and to spirit it returns.

Behind each and every astral globe, whether the globe be but an astral atom, or an astral planet, or an astral world; beyond its physics there is a meta-physical globe, its cause, and that is the real globe, of which the astral is but a temporary phenomenon. Take a spiritual globe and differentiate it. The Motion resulting produces a material astral globe. Stop the motion; bring it to a state of rest. The astral shadow disappears. It was merely spiritual phenomena.

Each and every astral atom is a model in miniature of the material and spiritual universe.

Each and every prakritic atom is the joint result of spirit and matter united and working together—of physics and meta-physics; and in its last analysis pure spirit; pure metaphysics.

THE BRAINY MINNOW.

Once there was a minnow.

Both his father and his mother were wondrously world-wise. Tact and adroitness enabled them to reach Methusalah's age, without ever having met with some accident of a deplorable nature, as for instance, getting into a pike's maw. They died, at last, and on their death-bed they said:

"Look out, sonnie, for if you do want to enjoy life, you have to look out of both your eyes!"

The young minnow himself had quite a goodly provision of brains. And the moment he began using these brains, he clearly perceived, that he had no chance, whichever way he turned. In the water, all around him, there swam great big fish, and he was so tiny. Anybody could swallow him in one gulp, though he could swallow no one. A cray fish could chop him in two with his claw, a water flea could bite into his neck and torture him unto death. As to his own brothers, the minnows,—why, even they, seeing he had a mosquito, would rush at him, a whole herd of them, and squash and dismember the mosquito in the heat of the stampede, so no one got any good of him.

And man! What an evil, treacherous creature he was. Just think of the endless inventions he thought out in order that a minnow should be put to an untimely and profitless death. Nets, wheels, creels, rods. Especially rods. Yet what instrument so idiotic as a rod? A thread, then a hook, then a bit of a worm or a fly stuck on the hook. And, mind you, stuck in a most improbable and unnatural position. Yet it was the rod that caught most minnows for man. Truly wise was his father, the old minnow, when he said, that in the world of the minnows the more idiotic the bait, the surer the attraction.

Minnow, the son, recognized the wisdom of the point of view of minnow, the father, and, at a very early stage, made a rule to look out of both his eyes. First of all he bethought himself of a home of such an ingenious pattern that it would admit no one else, yet hold him perfectly snug. He dug his hole with his own nose during a whole year. And, oh dear, the terror he continually lived in during this time, spending wakeful nights buried in the

slime, or sheltered by the stems of sedge, the sharp leaves of which were sure to cut and mangle anything bigger than a minnow, did it dare to come near them.

At last, the hole was ready. It was a lovely hole, neat, practical, big enough to hold only himself.

His second thought was about his mode of life. He decided it was to be as follows: by night, when men, animals, birds and fish are asleep, he would take some exercise, but by day he would just sit quiet in his hole and tremble. Of course, he also had to drink and to eat like anybody else, so he would dart out of the hole for one short moment, sharp at noon, when all the fish had already had their repast and could not possibly be hungry for a minnow, and the odds were that once in a while he probably would snatch some midget, if such was the will of heaven. And in case he did not get that midget,—well, he made up his mind he would do without it. He would sit quiet in his hole, hungry, and continue trembling.

And so he did.

Day after day, come sunrise, come sunset, he spent in his hole, never daring to get sleep enough, never hoping to have food enough, only just trembling and thinking to himself:

"It seems to me, I am still alive, but—Oh dear—what about to-morrow!"

Once he dreamt he had grown fabulously rich. The suddenness of the joy wakened him up. And what do you think?—at least half his snout stuck out of the hole and right in front of him there stood a cray fish! The cray fish stood perfectly still, as if enchanted, and stared at the minnow with his bonny eyes, his long moustache waved by the streaming water.

It was horrible.

And during the endless remainder of the day, until it grew quite dark, the cray fish kept guard over the minnow, who in the meanwhile trembled, and trembled, and trembled.

Another time, on coming home at day-break he was just stretching himself anticipating sweet rest, when—powers of heaven deliver us—he saw an enormous pike right at his own entrance. There the monster lingered opening and shutting its awful jaws. And, just like the cray fish, the pike remained there patiently the whole day, as if the very sight of the minnow was meat to him. But the

brainy minnow got the best of the pike: he simply would not go out, that was all.

And there never was a day, free from some fright of the kind, there never was a day, when on turning in, the minnow had no occasion to exult and exclaim: "Thank heaven, I am still alive, but what a narrow escape!"

Needless to say, the brainy minnow never married, never had any children, though he well remembered that his father had a very large family. But this is how he argued: "It was all very well in father's time, times were easy, food was cheaper, pikes had better hearts. But now-a-days there is little fish in the rivers, so even a minnow is a catch. It would be sheer folly to raise a family. All I could dream and hope for is that I should be able to keep my own life!"

And in this manner the brainy minnow lived to be at least a hundred years old. He trembled, and trembled, and trembled. He neglected all his relatives, he never had any friends. He never went to see anybody, and nobody ever came to see him. He never tasted wine, never played cards, never smoked, never followed a girl. He only trembled and thought: "Thank heaven, it seems to me I am still alive!"

The pikes were full of his praises. "Here is an example worthy of emulation," they said, "just think what a harbor of law-abiding peace the river would be, if everybody was like him."

How many years slipped by after the minnow's hundreth birthday was never recorded. But at last there came a day, when he knew he must die. He lay in his hole and thought:

"Thank heaven, I am dying a natural death, same as mother and father."

Then he thought how the pikes said "If only everybody was like our brainy minnow".

Yes, indeed, how would it fare with the world, if everybody was like him?

This question started his brains—of which, as you remember, he had a goodly provision—and all of a sudden it flashed into his mind: "why, as likely as not, the minnow tribe would come to an end."

First of all in order that minnows should continue one must raise a family, yet he had none. Moreover, in order that minnows should grow in power and flourish, in order that their tribe should be strong and alert, it was necessary that they should be brought up in the element, nature assigned to them, and not in a hole, where it always was twilight, where he had grown almost blind. It was necessary that young minnows were properly fed, that they did not shirk sociability, that they should be neighbourly, that they should borrow from each other virtues and other excellent qualities. Otherwise the whole race is sure to dwindle and degenerate into mere worms.

Wrong are those who think that the minnows, grown silly by perpetual fright, sitting in their holes and trembling, alone deserve the title of worthy citizens. Oh no, these are no citizens at all, they are mere useless nobodies of the minnow tribe. No one has ever been made either glad or sorry by them, no one got either glory or dishonor through them, they have no business to be in the river at all, no business to consume other folks' food.

And all this stood so clear and convincing before his mind, that all of a sudden he was seized with a passionate longing to get out of the hole, to swim the river for once a fearless, a proud, a glorious minnow. But no sooner did he think of it, than his usual frights seized him stronger than ever. And he knew that as he lived trembling, so trembling he must die.

His whole life came back to his memory. What joys did he ever have? Whom did he ever cheer up? To whom did he ever give a good advice? To whom did he ever speak kindly? Whom did he ever shelter, warm up, protect? Who has ever heard about him? Who will remember he had existed?

And to all these questions there was only one answer: nobody, no one.

He had lived and he had trembled, that was all. Even now, his last hour knocking at the door, he just trembled, and trembled, but what cause had he to tremble?

His hole was so dark, so tight, no sunray ever visited it, no warm wind ever reached it. And there he lay in the damp mugginess, blind, worn-out, forgotten. There he lay awaiting the

hungry death which was to free him from a useless, burdensome existence.

He heard other fish going to and fro past his door—perhaps his brother minnows—but none took any interest in him. Not one of them thought of coming in, of asking the brainy minnow by what miracle was he enabled to live over a hundred years, no pike having had a chance to swallow him, no cray fish ever chopping him in two, no fisherman ever tempting him with his hook? They all swam by, most of them having not the slightest idea, that here was a hole, in which a brainy minnow was in the process of crowning his life's endeavors.

And bitterest of all not one of them ever referred to his brains at all. Yet some of them said: "Have you heard about the old scare-crow who neither eats, nor drinks, never goes out, never receives, his only thought being about keeping safe his own unprofitable existence?"

One or two fish went even further, they said he was a fool and a shameless old idiot and wondered how the water community had put up with him so long.

His brain working in this wise, he went to sleep, though perhaps it was no sleep at all, but rather the beginning of the final unconsciousness. Death whispers entered his ears, he felt faint and benumbed all over his body. And at this point he once more dreamt the entrancing dream of his youth. Once more he dreamt that he had inherited an enormous fortune, that he had grown to be half a yard long, that he swallowed pike after pike.

Then he disappeared.

What did happen to him? Did a pike's maw get him at last? Or a cray fish cut him in two with his claw? Or did he die a natural death, his dead body ascending to the surface of the river. No one witnessed the proceedings, no one cared.

Yet the probability was in the favor of a natural death. For what pike would care to swallow a minnow, who, besides being sickly and dying, was a brainy one?*

*Translated from the Russian.

WHAT TO DO.

A THEOSOPHIST TO THEOSOPHISTS.

I am sure that we have all asked ourselves many times recently whether there is not something we should be doing. We feel that the long period of silence and inactivity is drawing to a natural close; that the reasons for it have been accomplished, and that it is time that we were up and doing. Then, naturally enough comes the question: What to do?

Should we try to revive the old forms of activity with which we are all more or less familiar? Should we hold branch meetings, prepare and read papers on "Karma" and "Reincarnation," hold debates, print and circulate pamphlets, and carry on the manifold enterprises which kept us all so happily busy in the old times. For those who think so, yes. But for some of us the time for that has passed, and there is some new work which we should be doing and which we have not yet been intuitive enough to find out. It is natural that we should turn to the old ways of working when the impulse to work comes over us again. They are what we understand, they are what stood the test of time, and what we know to be well worth while and successful. And yet, somehow, there is not the same heart-felt desire for it that there used to be. We are in doubt as to the desirability of it; even more, we are in doubt as to its beneficial effects. Something seems to tell us that the time for all that is past, that it is no longer desirable, no longer practical, no longer valuable, that in fact it would in a large measure be wasted effort. Yet we want to do. We have had a rest, have slept and been refreshed, and are ready for work again. What to do?

If we use a simile I think the question answers itself. If we liken the work of the Theosophical Society for the last 25 years to the building of a dam and our members to the laborers who did the work, we can see that the water stored behind the dam is the immense mass of theosophical thought which has been generated by our movement. Like other bodies of laborers we have not accomplished our work without friction, sacrifice and trouble. We have quarreled among ourselves, have divided into cliques, have formed exclusive trade unions, have done things which can be counter-

parted by all the phenomena of labor organizations; but all this we can pass by. The main and the important fact is that we have *built the dam!* It was finished in time, and as I said we have an immense quantity of water, or thought, stored up for use.

Now what shall we do with it? Shall we go on building the dam higher or shall we use the water we have stored, irrigate our garden and grow our flowers and plants? If we build our dam higher is it not a law of physics that at a certain height there is grave danger that it will break and be destroyed, and that all our work, and all the water we have stored will be lost in one great flood? And have we not been told by Madame Blavatsky, by Mr. Judge, and by all other teachers that if the work of building is continued in each century for more than 25 years, the reaction would be so great that more harm than good would result? And is it not plain in our simile that our dam is now high enough, as high as it is safe to go? I for one have no doubt about it. I think we have builded enough and that the time has come to use our accumulated stores.

For surely the fact that we should no longer build the dam does not mean that we should stop working altogether. Our work in fact has just begun. We have taken the first step. It has been successfully accomplished and it now remains for us to take the second.

This store of water then, the results of our past labor, just what is it? Stripped of metaphor, it is the atmosphere of Theosophy which has been spread abroad in the world, the effects of our philosophy on the thought of the time. We can see its influence in all departments of life, in science, art, philosophy, literature, theology even. We have not succeeded in making very many people professed theosophists, we have no very large number of members in our Society, but we have *affected the thought of the world.* We are living in an atmosphere of Theosophy, and people who never heard of it by that name are being influenced by it daily.

Our work therefore, to return to our simile, is to use wisely this accumulated water. We must cut canals, or employ those already in existence, and guide this water to the places where it is most needed; we must plant our crops in arid ground, and use it to irrigate and make things grow. Is our illustration not plain?

To put it again in theosophical language, we have created an immense body of thought influence on the higher astral plane; this does not stay still, but must obey the law of all planes and work downwards and out. This thought influence, then, is working down and out into all departments of human life, and affecting men's minds and thoughts. It is traceable in politics, and art, and literature, and religion, and is doing the real work of the theosophical movement of the 20th century. Did any of you suppose that the number of members we have in our Society represents the work which has been accomplished? If so you have failed to comprehend the subject in its most important bearings. Our societies are nothing, of no importance whatever in comparison with this real and vital work which has been done in moulding the thought of the world.

But what, you may ask, are we to do now? We have had the best we needed and are now ready to play the part awaiting us; one that is as important, if not more important than any work that ever has been done in the lifetime of the Society. We must, each in his own way, guide these streams of theosophic influence into worthy and useful channels. We must draw on our stock of theosophical water and irrigate the wastes of ignorance, misconception, and misunderstanding. To be still more definite, there are several thousand mystical movements which have started into being in this country in the last few years. Some are good, some are bad and most are both. We can encourage those which are good, do what we can to discourage those which are bad, and, what is perhaps most useful of all, we can steer those which are both good and bad into safer and clearer channels.

Some of us have important work here. Which of us is it? Each must decide for himself. But once he has the call, let him be up and doing.

SHANKARA'S THOUGHT.

The glamour of India; the hot, luminous sky; palm trees, with their metallic glitter, fringing her sacred rivers; heavy-curtained mango groves, where the golden orioles make their nests; dainty footed gazelles on the sunlight-flooded plains; crimson lotuses in the green darkness of some quiet forest pool; white cloud-wreaths fleeting across the blue, and gradually gathering into lightning-riven masses; all this weaves together a picture of imperious, unforgettable beauty. And there is something of this glamour in all the great records of Indian philosophy and song; in the Vedic Hymns, the high earnestness of the Upanishads, the divine legends of Rama and Krishna the Hero; in all the treasured wealth of India's Golden Age.

Through all the long centuries that followed after the dim Vedic dawn had passed, two great men stand out above all the peoples of India; two teachers, whose thought is of highest value and world-wide significance.

These two teachers are Gautama Buddha and Shankara Acharya.

The influence of Gautama Buddha, already enormous in his life time, has grown steadily during two and a half milleniums; so great is it to-day that a third of all the world has "sworn into the words of this master." And yet, within India itself, it is almost certain that the influence of Shankara Acharya has been stronger, deeper, and more enduring.

Shankara's work in India was threefold; first, a practical reform of the great and powerful Brahman caste; then a series of commentaries on the text-books of Vedic wisdom; and, lastly, a philosophic system, which for lucidity and coherence is equal to the best work that the thought of man has produced in any age or country. Of the first part of Shankara's work it is difficult to obtain any precise information; we can only say that his tendency was to draw the Brahmans away from ceremonial religion and ritual, and to insist on the preeminent value of discipline and self-development. "Sin and misery are the fruit of ignorance," he says, " and can only be removed by the opposite of ignorance, which is not ritual but wisdom."

The second part of Shankara's work, namely his masterly attempt to render the wisdom of the Upanishads, the Vedanta Sutras, and the Bhagavad Gita into the language and thought of his own time, can only be fully understood after a complete analysis and study of the great originals he commented on; a study that would require many volumes.

We may turn, therefore, to the third part of this great teacher's labours, his own philosophy of Identity: the Advaita system, which has dominated the thought of India for centuries.

We might make clear the philosophy of Identity, the Advaita of Shankara, by taking almost any of his treatises, and translating it step by step, with such comments as were necessary on the technical words involved. But perhaps it will be better to begin by realizing that the passage of the centuries since Shankara's day has made no difference at all to the fundamental problems of knowledge; indeed it would probably be true, to say that the great problems of knowledge as well as our powers of solving them, are precisely the same as they were a hundred thousand, or even a million years ago. Now, as then, we find ourselves in the midst of infinities, with the vast world of mountain and river, of sea and sky pictorially unfolded around us, in ever changing, ever wonderful mystery. We are shut in between the perpetually descending curtain of the past, and the perpetually ascending curtain of the future; and the wide world drifts before us, as the white cloud drifts before the moon.

Yes, says Carlyle, I grant you that we are here; but where in the name of goodness *is* here? The whole of science is nothing but the attempt to find another name for the great gallery of pictures in the heart of which we so mysteriously find ourselves. The whole outer universe, says science, is nothing but the interplay of two things; force and matter. Matter again is nothing but a series of centres of force, and force is the producer of phenomena. Phenomena, again, are "appearances," impressions produced on our consciousness. To sum up, the universe is the totality of "appearances" of phenomena; the universe is a vast panorama, a picture-gallery; and so we end exactly where we began.

The realist declares that "the universe is real, because I see it;" this involves the admission that the test of reality of the universe is that it is seen; that it is an object of perception; that it is

objective to consciousness. We have no other test of its reality than this, that it is objective to consciousness; and it is inconceivable that we should have any other test. It is inconceivable that we should be able to go outside the fact of our perception, and test the reality of the outer Universe independently. So far we can go and no further; and this perception is the starting point of Shankara's philosophy.

The outer universe, he says, is a dependent reality; a reality dependent on our perception; a reality depending on consciousness; and not a primary reality. We can begin our study of being in no other way than by the recognition of these two; consciousness, the perceiver of the outer universe, and the outer universe, which is objective to consciousness.

But the reality of these two does not by any means stand on the same level. And the reason of this is, that consciousness is two-fold and has two branches. The first branch is" I perceive the outer universe", and the second branch is "I am I." Therefore consciousness not only perceives the outer universe, and thus supplies the only test of the reality of the outer universe; but it goes further. Consciousness further affirms its own reality to itself, and is therefore self-existent, self-affirmed, self-based. But we do not know at all—and we cannot conceivably know—that the objective universe is self-existent, self-affirmed, self-based; the objective universe has, therefore, only a subsidiary degree of reality; it is secondary, dependent on consciousness.

"I am I" is the only self-affirmed, self-existent, self-based reality; and "I am I" is the basis of Shankara's philosophy. Now if "I am I" is the one reality, we shall be quite wrong in attributing to this primary reality the qualities and happenings of the subsidiary reality, the objective universe. We shall be quite wrong in attributing to consciousness the vicissitudes of what is objective to consciousness; as we should be quite wrong in attributing to the beholder the vicissitudes of what he beholds.

What then are the happenings, the vicissitudes that befall the objective universe? They are the world-old trinity of birth, growth, death; of beginning, middle, end, the end being the invariable prelude of a new beginning. This ancient trinity of birth and growth and death, of beginning and middle and end, which runs through the whole of the objective universe, must on no account, as we

have seen, be attributed to consciousness, the beholder of the objective universe; just as the changes a man beholds must on no account be attributed to the beholder. We are therefore led to see that if beginning and end are not to be attributed to consciousness, then consciousness must be beginningless, endless; if birth and death are not to be attributed to consciousness, then consciousness must be birthless, deathless, eternal.

This is Shankara's first great conclusion.

Starting from the self-evident truth that we have not, that we cannot conceivably have, any proof of the independent reality of the objective universe, which must thus for ever remain for us a secondary, dependent reality, he reaches this first conclusion: that consciousness, the primary reality, is beginningless, endless, eternal. Consider for a moment—Shankara would say,—consider for a moment this "I am I." Trace it back within yourself, stripping it of all outer vestures and veils. Then, as you at first said, "I am the owner of such and such houses and lands and ornaments," thus including many outward things in the notion of "I"; you must gradually learn to strip the inward reality of its outward vestures. I am "the owner of all these things" is the first false notion; for these outward things are clearly not I, are clearly objective to consciousness.

"I am such a person, with such a name; I am a Brahman, or a slave," is the second false notion; for name and condition are but outward conventional things.

"I am this body with its passions and powers;" is the third false notion; because the body with its powers is as clearly external and objective to consciousness as are house and lands.

"I am the emotions and fancies and memories which make up my mind" is the fourth false notion; for these emotions and memories are again external, objective to consciousness, just as one's bracelets and necklaces are.

Stripped of all these vestures, there is the pure residuum "I am I," secondless, partless; the alone, lonely, and pure. Seize this secondless partless reality within yourself; within the manifold veils and vestures and disguises you call yourself; seize this "I am I" for a single moment, and you become immortal. You recognize that you were, are, and must be, immortal and eternal.

This "I am I" is the pure, absolute residuum. It is pure, because it contains nothing but itself; because it is freed from the veils and vestures and disguises which are subject to beginning and end; to birth and death. It is absolute, because it cannot conceivably be derived from anything else; no conceivable number of things which are not "I" compounded and added together in any conceivable way could make up this absolute unity, this "I am I."

Seize the pure "I" within yourself for even an instant; and you reach the unshakeable conviction that this "I" could not be made up of any other thing, derived from any other thing; that "I am I" is absolute, self-based, self-existing. And if absolute, and not conceivably to be derived from any other thing, it is also not conceivably to be changed into any other thing.

Where should it go to? What should become of it? How could this only reality be conceivably hidden?

"I am I" can have had no beginning; "I am I" can have no end; and this you can realize directly, by seizing the pure "I" apart from veils and disguises.

And when you seize it, even for a single instant, you become eternal, you realize that you always were, always must be, eternal.

Such is the essence of Shankara's thought.

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